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### **Owain's Revolt? Glyn Dŵr's role in the outbreak of the rebellion.**

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# Owain's Revolt?

## Glyn Dŵr's role in the outbreak of the rebellion.

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### Abstract

This article asserts that Owain Glyn Dŵr was neither the instigator nor, initially, the sole leader of the revolt for which he has become well known. It also challenges the idea that there was just one rebellion and casts doubt on the notion that he proclaimed himself Prince of Wales on 16 September 1400.

The familiar version of the outbreak of the revolt was popularised by John Lloyd in 1931 and then furthered by certain of Rees Davies's later works. Their influential writings have provided a compelling illustration of the events in question and no secondary analyses notably disagree. However, their works primarily focus on the deeds of Glyn Dŵr and so largely ignore or dismiss the other acts of violence in Wales between 1399 and 1401, which were unconnected to Owain. In contrast, consideration of the other revolts described by contemporary sources enables a different understanding of the beginning of the revolt. Owain did eventually become the head of the rebel movement in Wales but, in the early years of the conflict, the situation was more complex than has previously been presented. This article details those other acts of rebellion and contextualises Glyn Dŵr's actions within contemporary events.

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### Introduction

In 1931, J. E. Lloyd described the outbreak of the revolt in his landmark work, *Owen Glendower (Owain Glyndwr)*. Although he noted that there was some ambiguity over the causes of the conflict, Owain's motives and the reasons others had to follow him, Lloyd painted a clear picture stating that 'Owen took up arms' and that others 'ranged themselves under his banner'.<sup>1</sup> Lloyd identified that the primary causes for Owain's actions were disputes with Lord Grey of Ruthin. He revealed that Grey had seized part of Owain's lands and had deliberately withheld a royal summons to campaign in Scotland with the new king, Henry IV. Consequently, Owain was declared a traitor and his lands were forfeit. When Owain's efforts for a mediated solution to the dispute failed, Lloyd wrote that 'Owen resolved, in mid-September ... to wait no longer for the peaceable redress of his grievances, but to strike a

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<sup>1</sup> J. E. Lloyd, *Owen Glendower (Owain Glyndwr)*, (Felinfach: Llanerch Press, 1992, orig. 1931), pp. 28-9.

resounding blow which would make it impossible henceforth to ignore him.<sup>2</sup> He then outlined the meeting of the main characters charged with gathering with Owain on 16 September 1400, who 'as their first step' allegedly proclaimed Owain prince of Wales and then conducted a string of attacks on Ruthin, Denbigh, Rhuddlan, Flint, Hawarden, Holt, Oswestry and Welshpool.<sup>3</sup> Lloyd noted that the Tudors were also in revolt at the time 'in distant Anglesey' and that their actions at Conwy the following year were self-motivated. However, his description of the outbreak of the revolt unequivocally portrayed Owain as its leader, who proactively took up arms, assumed the title of prince and commenced hostilities in September 1400.<sup>4</sup> It was also Owain who took the campaign south in 1401, according to Lloyd, 'Owen now transferred his activities to South Wales.'<sup>5</sup> There, he won a victory at Hyddgen after which 'great numbers rallied to him'.<sup>6</sup> Lloyd also wrote that Henry Don, a notable figure in south Wales, would come to wherever 'his leader', as their relationship was defined, summoned him.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Lloyd unambiguously depicted Owain as the leader of the many who rebelled and the one to whom the strongmen of Wales would come when called.

In more recent times, Rees Davies wrote perhaps the leading and most complete work on Glyn Dŵr. It followed and greatly embellished Lloyd's narrative. He recognised Lloyd's excellent work, saying that 'Lloyd's account is taken for granted in the following chapters; their aim is essentially supplementary to his.'<sup>8</sup> Davies did not agree with Lloyd on all matters however. For example, he identified Rhys ap Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Ieuan, a prominent supporter of Owain throughout the revolt, as 'Rhys Ddu'; whereas Lloyd believed Rhys Ddu to be Rhys ap Tudur.<sup>9</sup> Also, Davies described the Tudor brothers as the 'desperadoes who relaunched the rebellion', when they attacked Conwy castle in April 1401.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, Davies clearly identified Owain's revolt and their action at Conwy as part of one revolt. In contrast, Lloyd wrote that they 'were fighting in this Conway enterprise, solely for themselves and not for Glyn Dŵr'. In addition, Lloyd asserted that only 'William ap Tudur' was in the

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 30-2.

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 28-41.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>8</sup> R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 39; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 151, 199.

<sup>10</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 103, 199.

castle, while Rhys was in the mountains.<sup>11</sup> Even so, Davies's work began with a message similar to that of Lloyd's:

On Thursday 16 September 1400 a motley group of Welshmen from north-east Wales assembled at Glyndyfrdwy ... they proclaimed Owain prince of Wales. Two days later, having assembled a gang of a few hundred men from among their tenants and neighbours, they set out to attack Ruthin and other English towns in north-east Wales. So began the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr.<sup>12</sup>

Davies repeated Lloyd's account of the gathering of 16 September 1400 in his renowned work.<sup>13</sup> He reiterated the stories of the land dispute with Lord Grey and the withheld summons to campaign with Henry IV. Davies also elaborated on the short campaign against the English towns in north-east Wales that followed the gathering at Glyndyfrdwy, and detailed the government's response in the aftermath. That included the relief and reinforcement of castle garrisons and the sending of spies as the situation across Wales deteriorated in the wake of Glyn Dŵr's proclamation as prince and his first violent acts of rebellion.<sup>14</sup> Although cautious in his descriptions of the increasingly volatile situation in Wales at that time, Davies wrote that 'one year after he had proclaimed himself prince of Wales ... he had shown that his cause could ignite the flame of defiance in many parts of Wales.'<sup>15</sup> This shows that Davies believed that Owain had assumed the princely title and that 'his cause', as Davies described it, was the catalyst for the other acts of violence post-dating September 1400. Although Davies wrote about the revolt in a nuanced way, for example, 'no one could have anticipated the thunderbolt which struck Wales in 1400 ... and yet no one should have been surprised by it', he only saw one revolt, that of Owain: 'the whole of north Wales was to some degree involved in the rising: that is confirmed by the general pardon issued in 1401.'<sup>16</sup> In addition, he believed that Wales's other leaders all followed Owain.<sup>17</sup>

Although elements of Lloyd's work can be aligned with passages in Arthur Bradley's publication of 1901, that earlier offering was not of the same stature as that of Lloyd, and has

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<sup>11</sup> H. Nicolas, ed., *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, vol 1, (London: Record Commission, 1834), pp. 147 ('Willam ap Tudire q qst en le le chastell de Conway'), 150 ('Rees q est en lez montayns'); Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 37-9; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 52, 103-4. Davies also uses 'Gwilym' as opposed to 'William' ap Tudur preferred by Lloyd.

<sup>12</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>14</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 104-7.

<sup>15</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 88, 102.

<sup>17</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 199.



not made the same impact on the subject.<sup>18</sup> For example, Bradley apportioned the blame for the revolt in this way: 'It seems pretty evident that if the malicious Lord Marcher had rested content with his plunder and let sleeping dogs lie, Owen, and consequently Wales, would never have risen.'<sup>19</sup> Bradley's work contains numerous examples of value judgements that Lloyd and, particularly, Davies appeared careful to avoid. Nevertheless, Bradley presented the revolt as a national one and Owain as its unequivocal leader: 'The Welsh had now found a leader indeed and a chief after their own heart.'<sup>20</sup> For Bradley, the Welsh were one people united in revolt behind one leader. He described Owain's motivations, 'Glyndwr would hardly have been human if he had not made his first move upon his relentless enemy, Lord Grey of Ruthin ... but Owen fell upon the little town on a Fair day and made a clean sweep of the stock and valuables therein collected.'<sup>21</sup> With similar passion, Bradley also painted a picture of Owain, his appeal and his supporters:

But no laws could have repressed song in Wales, and indeed this period seems a singularly prolific one in both poets and minstrels. They persuaded themselves that their deliverance from the Saxon grip was at hand, and saw in the valiant figure of Owain of Glyndyfrdwy the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies that a Welsh prince should once again wear the crown of Britain. Glyndwr well knew that the sympathy of the bards would prove to him a tower of strength, and he met them more than half way.<sup>22</sup>

Bradley concluded his account of the outbreak of revolt by introducing the advance of the new king, Henry IV, in equally dramatic terms, 'He was now at Shrewsbury, within striking distance, as it seemed, of the Welsh rebels and their arch-leader, his old esquire, Glyndwr.'<sup>23</sup> In his colourful portrayal of events, Bradley clearly depicted Owain as the sole leader of a national revolt from the outset. His embroidered style and lack of academic caution allowed scope for other works to play a more influential role in studies of the period. John Lloyd's 1931 publication certainly dominated the subject for decades and remains a text of some importance, nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge Bradley's effort.

In 1934, another work on Owain appeared. J. D. Griffith Davies's *Owen Glyn Dŵr* took a populist line similar to that of Bradley, but it also appeared to have been influenced by

<sup>18</sup> A. G. Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr and the last struggle for Welsh independence, with a brief sketch of Welsh history* (London: Putnams, 1901), pp. 110-29.

<sup>19</sup> Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, p. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, p. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Bradley, *Owen Glyndwr*, p. 126.

Lloyd's more recent publication.<sup>24</sup> He described the outbreak of revolt in dramatic terms: 'All of a sudden this gentleman of Wales, Owen ap Gruffydd Fychan, lord of Glyn Dyfrdwy and Cynllaith Owen, appears on the pages of history as a rebel in arms against the king of England.'<sup>25</sup> On Grey's alleged seizure of land and Owain's appeal to parliament, he wrote, 'Owen was the law-abiding citizen, who went to law to get redress of his grievances ... Once again Owen placed a curb on a fiery Welsh temper (and sought redress) ... this time the law played him false – even the highest court in the realm, the king in parliament.'<sup>26</sup> He also propounded the currently familiar tale of Owain's alleged proclamation, saying 'let us turn to September 1400, for it was on the sixteenth day of that month that the plot to attack the English was hatched.'<sup>27</sup> The reader is left in no doubt that this was a carefully planned conflict against the English in general, with Owain the leader from the outset.

More than fifty years passed before the next major works on Owain arrived. Although he had written and taught on Owain before the emergence of his 1987 work, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063-1415*, it was here that the foundations of Rees Davies's key work in the field became visible. That was *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, which first appeared in 1995. In his more general publication of 1990, *Medieval Wales*, David Walker briefly touched on the ignition of the revolt without deviating from the standard account, adding that Owain 'defied the king at Glyndyfrdwy on 16 September.'<sup>28</sup> Walker also described the Tudor revolt as connected to Owain's rising.<sup>29</sup>

Even though Glanmor Williams published his *Owain Glyndŵr* shortly before Davies's *Revolt* arrived in 1995, he was no doubt influenced by Lloyd's and Davies's earlier works on the subject. Williams's account of the gathering at Glyndyfrdwy, the proclamation and the attack on Ruthin followed the line advanced and popularised by Lloyd and then Davies.<sup>30</sup> Williams also mentioned the Tudor revolt on Anglesey, but appeared to suggest that it occurred after that of Owain.<sup>31</sup>

Tony Carr's *Medieval Wales* came in the same year as Davies's *Revolt*, and it also advanced themes similar to previous publications. He wrote 'On 16 September 1400, at Glyndyfrdwy in Merioneth, Owain ap Gruffydd Fychan or Owain Glyn Dŵr, lord of

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<sup>24</sup> J. D. Griffith Davies, *Owen Glyn Dŵr* (London: Scholartis, 1934), pp. 28-42.

<sup>25</sup> Griffith Davies, *Owen Glyn Dŵr*, p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Griffith Davies, *Owen Glyn Dŵr*, pp. 29, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Griffith Davies, *Owen Glyn Dŵr*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> D. Walker, *Medieval Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 169.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, *Medieval Wales*, p. 170.

<sup>30</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Owain Glyndŵr* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993) pp. 25-6.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, *Owain Glyndŵr*, p. 26.



Glyndyfrdwy and Cynllaith Owain, was proclaimed prince of Wales and thus began a revolt ...<sup>32</sup> Carr described the Tudor revolt as simultaneous to Owain's and his account placed Glyn Dŵr as the unequivocal leader of a national revolt.<sup>33</sup> Carr also dismissed the idea that the Welsh rose in support of Richard, as claimed in the influential contemporary source written by Jehan Creton.<sup>34</sup> More contentiously, Carr also advanced the notion that 'the leaders of the Welsh community had been planning a revolt for some time.'<sup>35</sup> He further qualified that, writing 'The Glyn Dŵr revolt was many things; its motivation was political and it was the work of the haves rather than the have-nots. It was a massive protest by the political nation, a bid for political independence and, to some degree, a civil war. ... In Wales the revolt became a national rising, but one which had been planned and organised by the *uchelwyr*.'<sup>36</sup> This level of planning and co-ordination seems unlikely in light of the following article, however, Carr clearly forwards the idea that the revolt was one by a unified people, led by a noble elite, with Owain Glyn Dŵr at their head.

A similar promotion of the common story of the revolt's beginning can also be found by consulting popular histories of Wales. Two of the better-known populist works by Geoffrey Hodges and Chris Barber recount similar versions of the dispute with Lord Grey, the withheld summons and the land seizure. Both also described the Tudors actually in combat with King Henry IV, although Hodges recognised them as acting in their own interests.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most popular, best-selling recent general history of Wales is John Davies's *History of Wales*.<sup>38</sup> He presents it as a peasant revolt, adding that 'it would not be perverse to recognise that it was, above all, a national revolt' and that 'the first act of the insurrectionists was to proclaim Owain prince of Wales.'<sup>39</sup> Davies also claimed that 'Owain attracted to his side the ablest Welshmen of the age, and the policies they prepared for him were distinctly national.'<sup>40</sup> He too recounted that it was the dispute with Grey and Owain's disappointment at the unsatisfactory judicial process that led to the banner of revolt being unfurled at Glyndyfrdwy on 16 September 1400. In addition, Davies wrote that the Tudors in

<sup>32</sup> A. D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (Basingstoke: St Martin's Press, 1995) p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 112, 108-115.

<sup>34</sup> Carr, *Medieval Wales*, p. 111. Creton is discussed below.

<sup>35</sup> Carr, *Medieval Wales*, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 110-1.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Hodges, *Owain Glyn Dŵr and the War of Independence in the Welsh Borders* (Logaston: Logaston, 1995), pp. 37-42; Chris Barber, *In Search of Owain Glyndŵr* (Abergavenny: Bloreng, 1998), pp. 51-4.

<sup>38</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 196-8.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, pp. 196, 197.

<sup>40</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 197.

Anglesey followed Owain's lead at that time.<sup>41</sup> He also asserted Owain's pre-eminence, 'it was above all the rising of Glyn Dŵr; he was its inspiration and its leader for almost half a generation, and there is no suggestion that his leadership was challenged' and that 'there is no doubt that he had a magnetic personality.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly to the more academic works from the same period, these books also clearly emphasized Owain's leadership, as well as the by now accepted story of the revolt's outbreak and the unified, national cause that was played out in the first decade or so of the fifteenth century.

There is no question that John Lloyd and Rees Davies have contributed the most popular and the most authoritative publications on Glyn Dŵr. Their works propose a largely parallel interpretation of the commencement of hostilities and therefore merit attention. According to their accounts, the revolt was born of a dispute between Owain and Lord Grey, after negotiations failed came the attack on Ruthin and the subsequent localised five-day rampage. After which other, lesser, violent episodes arose in connection to Owain or, at least, motivated by 'his cause'. Lloyd and Davies were unambiguous in their accreditation of the revolt as Owain's from the beginning.

The remainder of this article challenges that position, contextualising Owain's acts within a broader landscape of more widespread violence and rebellion. In addition, this article questions the notion that Owain proclaimed himself prince of Wales and it also debates inconsistencies in the extant account of the fighting in September 1400. It does so by closely examining relevant contemporary evidence for each year of this study, 1399-1401, to produce a more detailed account of the highly-complex environment into which Owain Glyn Dŵr eventually came to prominence.

Rees Davies described Owain's actions as an 'extraordinary, indeed bizarre, act of defiance.'<sup>43</sup> It is argued here that a number of rebellions had already occurred or were ongoing when Owain Glyn Dŵr rose. Therefore, when considered in its context, another violent episode such as Owain's attack on Ruthin appears predictable rather than surprising. Finally, this article advances on the premise that an act of revolt is defined as violent resistance to individuals, groups or buildings which represented government authority.

### *1399: The First Welsh Uprising.*

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<sup>41</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 198.

<sup>42</sup> Davies, *A History of Wales*, pp. 197, 198.

<sup>43</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 102.

Before Glyn Dŵr took up arms in north-east Wales in September 1400, revolt erupted in the opposite corner of the country, in Carmarthenshire, in summer 1399. Neither the initial outbreak of violence, nor the episodes, which immediately followed, were instigated by or connected to Owain Glyn Dŵr.

The earliest incident of revolt was consequent to Henry Bolingbroke's uprising against Richard II. Henry's aims were, apparently, to win enough support to oblige Richard to reinstate his inheritance, seized after the death of his father, John of Gaunt, in February 1399. He returned from exile in France in June 1399, landing in Yorkshire where he began to gather an army. Richard received news of Bolingbroke's revolt while on expedition in Ireland, from where he set sail with his advisors and his army as soon as weather permitted. Richard returned from Ireland in late July 1399, landing in west Wales by the 24<sup>th</sup> of that month.<sup>44</sup>

Contemporary evidence is clear that significant disorder broke out between the Welsh and the English following Richard's landing in Wales. The Dieulacres Chronicle described how Richard's army landed in west Wales and dispersed as he travelled to Carmarthen. As it did so, violence erupted; 'thus they [the Englishmen in the army] were all scattered, and the Welsh despoiled them to a man, so it was only with difficulty that they got back to their homes.'<sup>45</sup> Thomas Walsingham who recorded in his chronicle corroborated this:

While the king's followers – magnates, lords or lesser men, regardless of their status – were harassed by Welshmen ... Of those who had been with or followed the king, scarcely one escaped unless he was prepared to hand over not only his arms but whatever was in his purse as well.<sup>46</sup>

Two of those robbed when they left Milford were the earl of Rutland and Sir Thomas Percy. By the time Richard reached Flint in north-east Wales, they had joined Bolingbroke.<sup>47</sup> The monk of Evesham also noted that 'He [Bolingbroke] was also joined there by Lord Scales

<sup>44</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397 – 1400, the Reign of Richard II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 36 – 7. Professor Given-Wilson also suggests 22 July 1399 as a date when these troubles began, C. Given-Wilson, *The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1377-1421* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) pp. 58-9. For further discussion on the site of Richard's landing see B. Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richart Deux roy Dengleterre* (London: Bentley, 1846), pp. 188-9; D. Preest, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 307. For a general account of this event see M. J. Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999). For a discussion of the sources which concern Richard's landing, see J. W. Sherborne, 'Richard II's return To Wales, July 1399', *Welsh History Review*, 7 (1974-5), 389-402.

<sup>45</sup> M. V. Clarke and V. H. Galbraith, eds., 'The Deposition of Richard II: Chronicle of Dieulacres Abbey, 1381-1403', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 14 (1930), pp. 125-81; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 155.

<sup>46</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 122; Preest, *Chronica Maiora*, p. 309.

<sup>47</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, pp. 141 (Percy), 149 (Rutland).

and Lord Bardolf, who had come from Ireland and had been robbed while passing through Wales.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the Welsh had attacked the king's troops – clearly an act of rebellion – as well as those of Bolingbroke, the pretender who became king shortly after. These independent, contemporary sources plainly show that considerable numbers of Welshmen, similarly to many in England, had risen in revolt by August 1399 at the latest.

Jean Creton, a French knight, was in Richard II's retinue as it returned from Ireland and travelled through Wales. By the end of 1402 or early the next year, he had completed a tale of the events surrounding Richard's fall.<sup>49</sup> Although problematic in places, particularly with his estimation of troop numbers and his supposition that the Welsh fought out of loyalty to Richard, Creton's work forms an invaluable source and his account is accepted as otherwise credible.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, it was written while the Welsh revolt was in full flood and has been identified as an attempt to motivate French nobles into action against the English.<sup>51</sup>

Richard had enjoyed close relations with the French crown; in 1396 he married Charles VI's daughter, Isabella, signed a 28-year truce and had secretly arranged that his father-in-law would send troops, should Richard feel threatened.<sup>52</sup> Henry's seizure of Richard and the English throne ended that supportive, peaceful relationship and no doubt the French wished to re-instate Richard.<sup>53</sup> By the time Creton's work began to percolate the French courts, it was probably accompanied by news of the burgeoning revolt in Wales. It seems unlikely to be unconnected to the brief landing of French and Breton troops in Wales in October 1403.<sup>54</sup> He wrote that he witnessed much fighting between the Welsh and the English, often involving large numbers of combatants: 'The Welsh, who saw their treason for

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<sup>48</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 129.

<sup>49</sup> J. Webb, 'A Translation of a French Metrical History of the deposition of King Richard the Second by Jehan Creton,' *Archaeologia* 20 (1823), pp. 1-433.

<sup>50</sup> J. Taylor, 'Richard II in the Chronicles', in A. Goodman, and J. Gillespie, eds., *Richard II, The Art of Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), p. 34; Given-Wilson *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 138 (Creton unrealistically numbered Welsh forces at forty thousand), in the same work the Kirkstall Chronicle gives a similarly over-inflated figure of twenty thousand (p. 134), although neither is corroborated elsewhere and both seem high. There is no other mention or official record of Welshmen mustering for Richard, instead the seems to reveal a lonely Richard moving between castles before his capture at parley, see Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II', pp. 172-3. Other examples of Creton attributing Welsh loyalty to Richard; Webb, 'Creton', pp. 104, 105, 204.

<sup>51</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> A. Steel, *Richard II* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1941), p. 212; N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale, 1997), pp. 226-7.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort*, pp. 299-302; E. J. Evans, 'The Authorship of the Deposition and Death of Richard II Attributed to Créton', *Speculum*, 15 (1940), p. 466; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 191-2; C. Given-Wilson, 'The Quarrels of Old Women': Henry IV, Louis of Orleans, and Anglo-French Chivalric Challenges in the Early Fifteenth Century' in G. Dodd and D. Biggs, *The Reign of Henry IV, Rebellion and Survival* (York: York University Press, 2008), p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> F.C. Hingeston, *Royal and Historical Letters during the reign of Henry IV* (London: Longman, 1860), vol 1, pp. 160-2 (Welsh, French and Bretons at Kidwelly); Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 76-7.

what it was [Englishmen deserting Richard en masse], attacked them in strength, in groups of one or two thousand ... Thus were the English despoiled by the Welsh.’<sup>55</sup> Creton further related the tale of a horseman who reported to Richard 'behold how the English were treated by the Welsh, who had no mercy on them, as they marched like people put to the rout, here ten, here twenty, there forty, there an hundred'.<sup>56</sup>

An additional incident detailed the probably apocryphal account of a Welsh raid on Henry's camp in an apparent attempt to free the captive Richard. The incident reportedly took place near Lichfield, almost seventy miles as the crow flies from Flint, where Richard was captured in Wales.<sup>57</sup> Although Creton described the event vividly, it seems logistically and militarily unrealistic.<sup>58</sup>

Another contemporary source mentioned Welsh-English violence just over the border in England: 'as soon as the Duke [Henry] and his people set out from Chester, the Welsh did him great damage; for, whenever they could entrap the English, they killed and stripped them without mercy.'<sup>59</sup>

Despite the confusion caused by Bolingbroke's revolution, these English and French sources consistently and independently demonstrate that in 1399 the Welsh had risen violently against the incumbent king and the man who became the next regent. This clearly shows that the roots of the rebellion attributed to Owain Glyn Dŵr stemmed from Carmarthen and then other parts of Wales during the summer of 1399. The rising of 1399 was entirely unconnected to Owain Glyn Dŵr: therefore our understanding of the revolt requires fresh consideration. It is credible to suggest that Owain acknowledged the Carmarthenshire revolt as the beginning of a wider regional revolt. In November 1401, he wrote a letter seeking support from the lords of Ireland, saying that 'we have manfully waged [war] for nearly two years past.'<sup>60</sup> This significant outbreak of rebellion in Wales is not mentioned in either Lloyd's or Davies's works on Owain Glyn Dŵr, despite the latter describing Richard's return from Ireland and procession through Wales.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Webb, 'Creton', pp. 104-6; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, pp. 137-52.

<sup>56</sup> Webb, 'Creton', pp. 104-5, 113.

<sup>57</sup> Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort*, pp. 211-2; M. J. Bennett, 'Richard II and the Wider Realm', in Goodman, and Gillespie, *Richard II, The Art of Kingship*, p. 199.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Welsh did him [Bolingbroke] much harm and despite, and slew and robbed a great number of his people; sometimes they came to set fire to the lodgings of the English: and, certes, I was right glad of it; and, besides, it was not in the power of the English to take any of them except by chance.' Webb, 'Creton', pp. 177-8.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, *Chronique de la Traïson et Mort*, p. 211.

<sup>60</sup> T. Matthews, ed., *Welsh Records in Paris* (Carmarthen: Spurrell, 1910), Letter to the lords of Ireland, pp. 104-5, 112-3. Owain did not overtly style himself as '*princeps Walliæ*' in documentation until the 1404 Treaty of Alliance with France, pp. 23-31.

<sup>61</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 78-9.

### *1400: Other incidences of rebellion*

The Epiphany or Earls' Revolt, during which English nobles sought to kill the new king, Henry IV, was hatched in December 1399. It briefly came to life in southern England in early January 1400, before being crushed in the same month. Days after the demise of that uprising, another rebellion erupted in Cheshire. Although it was quickly smothered, with judicial sessions beginning in March 1400, the leaders were not fully brought to peace through pardons until mid-1401. Due to the fact that Henry 'Hotspur' Percy raised his rebel army in the area in 1403, it has been suggested that the county was not entirely pacified after the rising in 1400.<sup>62</sup> These two English insurgencies demonstrate that some in England were also willing to rebel against Henry IV. Within this broader landscape of dissatisfaction over the change of monarch, particularly the manner in which that change occurred, other acts of rebellion in Wales should be considered.

Lloyd described a revolt by the Tudors which included royal forces being attacked on Anglesey. Davies also wrote of an uprising in north-west Wales in 1400 shortly before Owain's better-known activities at Ruthin; this probably referred to the Tudor revolt. Lord Grey reported the widespread disorder in north Wales to Henry, prince of Wales.<sup>63</sup> There is nothing tangible that connects these events to Owain. In addition, it is noteworthy that in October 1400, the destination for Henry IV's expeditionary force was Bangor and then Caernarfon, in the Tudor heartland. While Henry's army briefly passed through Ruthin, it did not stop at Glyndyfrdwy. This strongly suggests that the Tudor rising was considered the more serious event at the time; Henry's failure to pursue Glyn Dŵr or destroy his property at that time gives weight to this assertion. Henry declared the Tudor brothers' lands forfeit, along with those of Glyn Dŵr.<sup>64</sup>

Another act of revolt from the area pre-dated Owain's attack on Ruthin and also appears unconnected to him. A later legal proceeding against a Denbighshire man, Dafydd ap Cadwaladr Ddu, retrospectively dated the start of his rebellious activities, in league with others, to 17 August 1400; clearly prior to Owain's actions.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> P. McNiven, 'The Cheshire Rising of 1400', *BJRL*, 52 (1970), pp. 375-396.

<sup>63</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 33-4; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 102-3, 237.

<sup>64</sup> T. Rymer, ed., *Fœdora, Volume 8, 1397-1413* (London: HMSO, 1709), pp. 181-2 (exemptions); H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, ed., *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1399-1401* (London: HMSO, 1903), p. 451 (exemptions).

<sup>65</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 304.

The Tudor rising was evidently of sufficient gravity to bring the king and his army to the area. However, these two examples clearly show that the Welsh revolt of 1400 was not started by Owain Glyn Dŵr, who was still yet to enter the fray.

*September 1400: Owain's Revolt and its immediate aftermath*

The story of Owain Glyn Dŵr's first acts in the revolt is well-known. Lord Grey invaded part of Owain's land, seizing it for himself. Then, Parliament refused to support the Welshman's consequent petition for justice, ignoring advice from the bishop of St Asaph that the Welsh might revolt if justice were not seen to be done. Parliament famously scoffed at the Welsh as a rabble of 'bare-footed idiots' belonging to 'a nation of little reputation.'<sup>66</sup>

The parliamentary session in question must have been the first of Henry IV's parliaments which sat between 6 October and 19 November 1399.<sup>67</sup> The bishop of St Asaph and Lord Grey of Ruthin attended; it was during this sitting that Henry IV announced his plan to attack Scotland.<sup>68</sup> No such Welsh affairs appear in Richard II's last parliament in September 1397, while Henry's second parliament sat in 1401 and debated the violence that had already occurred in Wales.<sup>69</sup> The 1399 parliament also made proclamations against disturbers of the peace who 'go to fairs, markets, and churches, along the high roads, armed in a warlike manner' and declared that treason cases were to be tried in court, not in parliament.<sup>70</sup> While not explicitly or uniquely concerned with Wales, they can unquestionably be applied to events there. However, this would date Grey's alleged attack on Owain's land as prior to October 1399. This suggests that Glyn Dŵr waited a year for redress.

When he failed to join the new king on the expedition to Scotland in summer 1400, Henry declared Owain a traitor and his lands forfeit. Other nobles suffered a similar sanction for the same reason. It is claimed that Lord Grey withheld a royal summons destined for Glyn Dŵr and was thus responsible for Owain's disinherittance.<sup>71</sup> In riposte, Owain and his

<sup>66</sup> *PPC*, vol 1, p. 134; F. S. Haydon, ed., *Eulogium Historiarum*, vol 3 (London: Longman, 1863), p. 388; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 107; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. xlvii.

<sup>67</sup> C. Given-Wilson, ed., *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504*, vol 8, Henry IV, 1399-1413 (*PROME*) (London: Boydell, 2005), pp. 9-92.

<sup>68</sup> Given-Wilson, *Parliament Rolls*, vol 8, pp. 3, 7.

<sup>69</sup> C. Given-Wilson, ed., *PROME*, vol 7, *Richard II, 1385-1397*, p. 403; Given-Wilson, *PROME*, vol 8, pp. 93-153.

<sup>70</sup> Given-Wilson, *Parliament Rolls*, vol 8, pp. 69, 77-8.

<sup>71</sup> Rymer, *Fædora*, pp. 163-4. For a general overview of the causes and events of the outbreak of the revolt, see Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 28-35. Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 65-93, 102-6, 153-4.



supporters gathered at Glyndyfrdwy on 16 September 1400, where they apparently proclaimed him prince of Wales. Contemporary records name Owain among those who sacked Ruthin on 18 September 1400 and then conducted a five-day campaign against neighbouring towns.<sup>72</sup>

Davies wrote that 'no one could have anticipated the thunderbolt which struck Wales in 1400', adding that the 'revolt struck Wales like a bolt from the blue in September 1400.' He further described the event as an 'extraordinary, indeed bizarre, act of defiance.'<sup>73</sup> Davies clearly stated that violence in Wales at that time was unexpected. However, the evidence does not support this evocative picture of an unexpected revolt in September 1400. Within the context of the preceding and contemporary violence, in conjunction with the instability experienced by the new government in England, another outburst appears predictable rather than surprising. At this early stage, the attack on Ruthin should be viewed as just one among a number of comparable incidents.

The government's response to violence in north Wales was significant. It comprised of a military expedition led by Henry himself, executions, fines and pardons. Henry's army was returning from Scotland before diverting towards Wales. North of the border, Henry fielded a fighting force of more than 13,000 soldiers. This totalled between 15-20,000 men when support elements are included.<sup>74</sup> It is unclear precisely how many men came to Wales with Henry, but it is realistic to base an estimate on these figures. Their return journey from Shrewsbury to Caernarfon also supplied further information on the most notable rebels. Owain was condemned in a hearing made at Bangor, outside his home territory, on 7 October.<sup>75</sup> It is telling that the campaign terminus was in Tudor rather than Owain's lands. On 18 October, when Henry and the army re-entered England, orders were issued 'to David Gamme and John Hauard to arrest Rees Kiffyn, esquire, and bring him before the king in

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<sup>72</sup> B. Smith, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr's Raid on Ruthin (1400)', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 10 (1961), pp. 239-41; R. Ian Jack, 'Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Lordship of Ruthin', *Welsh History Review*, 2 (1964-5), pp. 310-1; G. A. Sayles, ed., *Select Cases in the Court of the King's Bench under Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V*, vol 88 (London: Selden Society, 1971), pp. 114-7; G. C. G. Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', *Studia Celtica*, 40 (2006), pp. 117-26.

<sup>73</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 2, 88, 102.

<sup>74</sup> A. L. Brown, 'The English Campaign in Scotland, 1400' in H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn, eds., *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S B Chrimes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), pp. 40 – 54; C. J. Neville, 'Scotland, the Percies and the Law in 1400', in G. Dodd and D. Biggs, *Henry IV: The Establishment of the Regime, 1399 - 1406* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 73.

<sup>75</sup> *CPR 1399-1401*, p. 555; Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 32-5. Note, Owain was also condemned at legal hearing in Oswestry on 6 October 1400. See Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 117-26.

person.<sup>76</sup> However, there were no orders to arrest Owain, suggesting that 'Rees Kiffyn', or Rhys Gethin, was initially the most sought-after rebel. This shows that at this point, there was no clear rebel leader, nor one lone government scapegoat.

After Wales was seemingly brought to peace, a general pardon was issued on 30 November, with the caveat that it would be valid until the next parliament. Meeting between 20 January and 10 March 1401, parliament reaffirmed the general pardon covering the year from 'Saint Hilary, 1 Henry IV, to Epiphany last' (14 January 1400 to 6 January 1401) and extended to all but three men named as 'Owynni de Glendourdy', 'Reez ap Tudour' and 'Willielmum ap Tudour'. While this long period encompassed by the pardon issued on 10 March 1401 does not cover the acts of 1399 or the Epiphany Rising, it plainly starts too early to solely refer to Owain's revolt. This evidence also appears to tacitly acknowledge that other rebellions pre-dated the assault on Ruthin.<sup>77</sup>

It might not be a coincidence that three of the wealthiest native Welsh landowners were not pardoned by a new regent in need of gifts with which to reward his supporters. This notion might well be substantiated by the swift award of Glyn Dŵr's estates on 8 November 1400 to John Beaufort, one of John of Gaunt's illegitimate sons and therefore the new king's half-brother. Richard II had legitimised the Beauforts and thus they held a potential claim to the crown too. By bringing them into his patronage, Henry shrewdly nullified any potential threat posed by his father's other family.

#### *1400: Problems With The Traditional Story Of Owain's Revolt*

The following section examines the details of the king's orders, Owain's alleged proclamation as prince and some logistical difficulties concerned with the subsequent five-day campaign.

The evidence shows that Henry IV issued orders from Northampton on 19 September. He wrote two orders; one called for troops and fencible men from several counties to suppress an unspecified rebellion in Wales, the other demanded the mobilisation of troops for the defence of castles in Cheshire against the Welsh.<sup>78</sup> If this were in response to Glyn Dŵr's actions at Ruthin, then it is important to ascertain how this news reached Henry. News could

<sup>76</sup> CPR 1399-1401, p. 555.

<sup>77</sup> Rymer, *Fædora*, 163-4 (November 1400), pp. 181-2 (exemptions); CPR 1399-1401, p. 392 (November 1400), p. 451 (exemptions); Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II' *BJRL*, 14, pp. 173-4; Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 33-4; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 102 (both on revolt in north-west Wales); Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 86-9 (Epiphany Rising).

<sup>78</sup> Rymer, *Fædora*, vol 8, pp. 159-60; Webb, 'Creton', pp. 104-7, 176-8; H. Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History* (London: Harding and Lepard, 1827), pp. 3-4; CPR 1399-1401, p. 357; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 304.

only travel as fast as a messenger moved on foot, horse or by ship. Therefore, the speed by which messages were delivered in this period is an important consideration.

It seems that there was no organised, prepared system for disseminating news in 1400. Armstrong, the leading authority on this subject, reveals that 'Edward IV in his last campaign against the Scots (summer 1482) invented the new practice of stationing riders at intervals of twenty miles so that a letter passed at the rate of 200 miles in two days, through a chain of messengers, none of whom was allowed to ride beyond his allotted sector'.<sup>79</sup> The same article describes the ways in which European rulers received intelligence in the fifteenth and early sixteenth-centuries as 'curiously haphazard'.<sup>80</sup> With that in mind, it appears reasonable to assume there was no pre-prepared, organised system of riders and message-bearers in England prior to Edward IV's initiative in 1482. Even when this system was introduced, this innovation was created to improve communications with crown forces campaigning in Scotland and it was not implemented elsewhere. Armstrong's article on the speed of news distribution included a list of journeys from 1437 to 1502; decades after the week in focus. Although the daily movement rates increased as road and message-relay systems developed, even half a century after the attack on Ruthin, they still remained noticeably less than fifty miles per day on average.<sup>81</sup>

There is no complete, accurate road map for this period. Nor is it known who carried messages about the rebellion in Wales, nor the route they took. A cross-country route might have been advisable if hostile forces occupied or observed the roads, which seems axiomatic. Therefore, maps are not reliable in this matter. Modern technology can assist however and it shows that the site of Northampton castle lies 118 miles south-east of Ruthin, in a direct line.<sup>82</sup> This ignores the terrain between them and the lack of a direct road link, therefore the actual travelling distance is greater and the route uncertain. Also, it is doubtful that a messenger leaving from Ruthin or Chester knew the whereabouts of Henry IV and his army on the move. Additionally, the message would have passed through several sites, slowing its flight, rather than travelling well over a hundred miles in one journey in the same hands.

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<sup>79</sup> C. A. J. Armstrong, 'Some Examples Of The Distribution And Speed Of News At The Time Of The Wars Of The Roses' in R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern, (eds.), *Studies In Medieval History Presented To Frederick Maurice Powicke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), p. 439.

<sup>80</sup> Armstrong, 'The Distribution And Speed Of News', p. 431.

<sup>81</sup> Although the precise mileage along medieval roads is unknown, using the formula: speed = time taken over distance travelled, it is possible to estimate how many miles per day these later fifteenth-century messengers achieved. In taking the first ten of Armstrong's examples, which took place mostly around the well-developed urban centres of the south and east of England, only one manages more than 50 miles per day, and that likely involved travel by ship.

<sup>82</sup> Using Google Earth.

Even ignoring these important and time-consuming considerations, but allowing this notional messenger to leave on the morning of 18 September and move unabated and directly to Northampton castle, a journey of more than 118 miles is too far for a message to travel in two days in 1400. Davies's assertion that Henry IV reacted to news of Owain's revolt is therefore unsubstantiated.<sup>83</sup> Considering the evidence available, the revolt to which Henry's orders referred on 19 September was not that of Owain but probably widespread disturbances or perhaps those risings of the Tudors and Dafydd ap Cadwaladr Ddu. It seems probable that the news from Ruthin first went to Chester. Robert Masey led a force against the rebels from there, suffering ambush near Flint roughly 10 miles from Chester, probably on 20 or 21 September, 1400.<sup>84</sup> For a force to muster and advance so slowly out of nearby Chester supports the idea that this news did not move swiftly to the king.

The evidence which declared that Owain was proclaimed prince of Wales is problematic. In the first instance, no contemporary Welsh evidence makes such a claim. Even Owain, in his correspondence with Welsh, Scots and Irish interlocutors, did not mention it at the time. This must be considered within the context of the moment: his enemies accused him of proclaiming himself as prince, yet he did not use that title in letters to other leaders where it would have been advantageous for him to do so. Indeed, his first use of the title came in his correspondence to the French four years later.<sup>85</sup> The only evidence which makes the accusation are English legal proceedings and their veracity has never been questioned. However, both proceedings which make the accusation of Owain's princely claim are almost identical, suggesting a common origin. Notably, that his supporters 'elevated [him] as their Prince of Wales at Glyndyfrdwy'.<sup>86</sup> However, the same sources make other wild claims against him, saying that he plotted the death of King Henry, 'the extinction for ever of the crown and regality of ... all his successors, the kings of England, and the death of Henry, prince of Wales,' as well as 'all the magnates and nobles of England, and also the death, destruction and everlasting obliteration of the whole English language'.<sup>87</sup>

Each of these claims is damning, but also fantastical. It is reasonable to assert that these charges were not so much founded on fact but were intended to denounce Glyn Dŵr and any who might support him. Firstly, there is no suggestion or evidence anywhere that the

<sup>83</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 237. Note: Lloyd does not make the same claim (pp. 32-3).

<sup>84</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 102.

<sup>85</sup> Matthews, *Welsh Records in Paris*, pp. 23, 103-6, 111-4, 'Owynus, Dei gratia princeps Wallie' (10 May 1404); Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 148-53, 158-61.

<sup>86</sup> Sayles, ed., *Select Cases*, pp. 116-7; Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', p. 123 (Thomas, recognised that the two sources were almost identical, 118, suggesting a common origin.)

<sup>87</sup> Sayles, 'Select Cases', p. 114; Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 120, 123.

Crown had an informant at the gathering on 16 September where the alleged proclamation took place. This clearly casts a shadow over the accuracy of the charge. The lack of its corroboration in contemporary sources for 1400 is also noteworthy. Owain did not refer to himself by that title anywhere prior to his alliance with the French in summer 1404.<sup>88</sup> In that letter he openly styled himself prince of Wales to project an image of a ruler worthy of French support. In his letters pre-dating his French correspondence, the title of prince is glaringly absent.<sup>89</sup> There was no reason not to use the title to these interlocutors, were such a claim really in the air already. The chronicler Adam Usk, present in Wales until 1402, neglects to recall this putative title, describing him as 'Owen, lord of Glyndyfrdwy' instead.<sup>90</sup> In a letter written to Henry Don sometime before October 1403, Owain was still simply styling himself as 'Lord of Glyn Dyfrdwy'.<sup>91</sup>

The charge that Owain sought to murder King Henry IV and all of his successors, including Prince Henry by name, as well as all of the magnates and nobles of England, appears hysterical. Realistically and logistically, it could never be achieved. If expressed as a desire, then there is no explicit evidence on whose word this charge was founded. Owain appears to have denied these charges during negotiations towards the end of 1401 in which he appeared tractable to a peaceful settlement: these are not the actions of a pretender to the princely title.<sup>92</sup> It seems more reasonable and likely therefore, to suggest that he announced no plot to kill every living English noble, nor did he claim to be prince at this early stage of the rebellion. He was related to and friendly with a number of English nobles. However, it seems effective as a means of damning Owain and any who might align themselves with him.

Such far-fetched claims that enemies intended to destroy the king, his people, the country and the language of the land were not unique to this case. In 1344, accusations were made that Philip of France had a 'firm purpose to destroy the English language and to seize the territories of England'.<sup>93</sup> In 1377, during the reign of Richard II, parliament was warned that Charles V, with the aid of the Spanish and the Scots, 'intended to destroy the king and the

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<sup>88</sup> Matthews, *Welsh Records in Paris*, p. 23 'Owynus, Dei gratia princeps Wallie' (10 May 1404).

<sup>89</sup> Matthews, *Welsh Records in Paris*, pp. 103-6, 111-4; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 148-53, 158-61.

<sup>90</sup> Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 100-1 ('Oenus dominus de Glyndordee').

<sup>91</sup> Matthews, *Welsh Records in Paris*, pp. 103-6 (Matthews appears to have added the princely title within the French and Latin which are not replicated in the headings of the English translations) 111-4; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 148-53; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 102-6.

<sup>92</sup> *PPC*, vol 1, pp. 173-9; M. D. Legge, ed., *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1941), no 244; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 106, 182-5.

<sup>93</sup> J. Strachey, ed., *Rotuli Parliamentorum ut et Petitiones, et placita in Parlamento tempore Edwardi R. III*, vol 2 (London, 1776), p. 147; N. H. Nicolas, *History of the Royal Navy* (London, 1847), vol 2, p. 83; S. Phillips and M. Ormrod, eds., *PROME, volume 4 Edward III, 1327-1348*, p. 372.

realm of England, and wholly extirpate the English language.<sup>94</sup> Again, in 1386, announcements were made that the next French king, Charles VI, had 'resolved to invade England with the intention of destroying the realm.'<sup>95</sup> This ploy was also used by Henry V; rumours that the French and the Welsh were coming to England to destroy the realm began circulating in July 1413, just four months after his coronation.<sup>96</sup> In reality, these seem to be either wild panic or gestures designed to galvanise support for the crown and dissuade opposition factions from uniting. Shortly after taking the crown, Henry IV and his council built a case for war against Scotland, in which he accused the Scots of threatening to invade and destroy the realm, the King, the people and the English church.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, it appears formulaic that enemies were so accused. In this light, once Owain had been identified as an enemy of the king, such a claim appears perhaps predictable. In May 1401, the king declared that the rebels planned to enter the realm, destroy the king, all of his lieges and 'nostre langue angloys'.<sup>98</sup>

The best known of the two legal proceedings which make the accusation that Owain was proclaimed prince only mentions him in passing and focuses on the trial of a certain John Kynaston the elder.<sup>99</sup> The version available dates from the end of October 1402; prior copies and the original 'presentment' of 25 October 1400 referred to within that case appear missing or unusable.<sup>100</sup> Kynaston and his associates were accused of being in Owain's company during his campaign, although the main thrust of the case focused on allegations of robbery, horse-theft and cattle-related crimes by the accused. He was eventually found innocent, largely on the grounds that the alleged crimes took place outside Shropshire where the charges were levelled.<sup>101</sup> The case gives a flavour of the lawlessness of the period and outlines the irregular mosaic of legal jurisdictions of the time. Also, that the fluidity of border loyalties were not strictly understood along ethnic lines.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Strachey, *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, p. 362; Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, p. 155; G. Martin and C. Given-Wilson, eds., *PROME*, volume 6, *Richard II: 1377-1384*, pp. 70-1.

<sup>95</sup> Rymer, *Fædora*, volume 7, p. 540; Nicolas, *Royal Navy*, pp. 309-10; *PROME*, volume 7, *Richard II: 1385-1399*, p. 31.

<sup>96</sup> Sayles, 'Select Cases', pp. 213 – 5.

<sup>97</sup> Rymer, *Fædora*, vol 8, pp. 113, 125-6, 144-7, 149-50, 155-8; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>98</sup> J. L. Kirby, ed., *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399 – 1422)*, (London: HMSO, 1978), p. 28.

<sup>99</sup> Sayles, ed., *Select Cases*, pp. 114-7.

<sup>100</sup> In an email exchange, Dr James Ross of the PRO described the original document, JUST 1 / 1549, as too illegible for use (March 2010).

<sup>101</sup> *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1399 – 1405* (London: HMSO, 1931), pp. 129-30.

<sup>102</sup> Davies, *Revolt* (use of the term 'ethnic' to distinguish Welsh from English), pp. 173, 217, 224, 290.

The more relevant document is an inquisition held in Oswestry on 6 October 1400, which sought to identify those involved with Owain's September campaign.<sup>103</sup> Firstly, it appears to solve one mystery; Owain and his men mounted a chevauchée or cavalry raid.<sup>104</sup> Given the movement rates of the time, the campaign appears impossible to achieve as infantry. Commonly, armies on campaign managed low daily mileage; in August 1400, Henry IV's troops averaged 8 miles per day as they marched the 120 miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne along the coastal route to Leith via Haddington in 15 days.<sup>105</sup> Individuals or small, lightly-armed groups such as archers or messengers could travel further, although consistent, accurate figures are elusive. Good contemporary evidence puts 20 miles per day as an acceptable high-end figure for movement by foot in peace-time.<sup>106</sup> The campaign began on 18 September by sacking Ruthin. Over the next three days, the towns of Denbigh, Rhuddlan, Flint - where the rebels fought a relieving force from Chester under Robert Mascy - Howarden and Holt were also attacked.<sup>107</sup> Modern technology enables the plotting of direct links between each place attacked during the rampage. This method is imperfect because it gives a straight line reading between points; the rebels obviously had to respect the geography beneath their feet and travel further. In addition, it supposes that the rebels moved directly from one point to another without retiring to a secure spot a few miles uphill overnight; which was likely. However, this method gives a good idea of the campaign's difficulty. Using Ruthin as start point on 18 September, Denbigh castle lies roughly 6.5 miles to the north-west. Rhuddlan castle is approximately 7.5 miles north by north-east of Denbigh. Flint castle is roughly 14 miles east of the previous target, where they rebels fought Mascy's force as well as attacking the town. Howarden castle is 7 miles south-east of Flint, while the castle mound at Holt is just over 9 miles south-east of Howarden. All of these movements and attacks apparently took place between 18-21 September: this constitutes a demanding campaign for the forces which conducted it. This arc of towns and castles, from Ruthin to Howarden, all lie around the Clwydian range of hills and fall within striking distance of Glyn

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<sup>103</sup> Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 117-26.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 118, 121 '...fuerunt in comitua predicti Oweni ad dictam equitaturam suam proditoriam in exercitu victualia et auxiliis', p. 122, 'equitacionem ... equitacionem', p. 124 '... were in the retinue of the aforementioned Owain with regard to his said treacherous cavalry campaign with arms, food and aid', pp. 125 and 126 both mention 'cavalry campaign'.

<sup>105</sup> Brown, 'The English Campaign in Scotland, 1400' in Hearder and Loyn, eds., *British Government and Administration*, pp. 40-54; D. Green, *Edward the Black Prince. Power in Medieval Europe* (London: Harlow, 2007), p. 35 (carts managed the lowest mileage, as little as 150 miles in a month, or just 5 per day).

<sup>106</sup> I. Walker, *Harold, The last Anglo-Saxon King* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p. 160 (the Normans only appear to manage 25 mpd on horseback); H. J. Hewitt, *The Organization of War under Edward III* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2004), pp. 40-7.

<sup>107</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 31-2; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 102.



Dŵr's home territory. If plotting a campaign from Glyndyfrdwy, these seem logical enough places to attack in a circuit which might bring the rebels back to their start point. Although Holt and Howarden seem to be stretching the distance for any force to effect a safe withdrawal, nevertheless, one would still be possible from there. By this point, including the advance from Glyndyfrdwy to Ruthin, presumably on 17 September, this force had moved a minimum of 55 miles in 4 days and engaged in 7 combats. If this campaign was undertaken by just one fighting party, it would probably have been spent as well as laden with booty by 21 September.

Notwithstanding, the legal proceedings state that they continued, presumably still carrying their spoils, and wrought significant damage at Oswestry and the surrounding area on Wednesday 22 September.<sup>108</sup> The castle at Oswestry is over 13 miles, south west of Howarden, to strike at it the rebels curiously ignored the castle at Chirk, just 4 miles north of Oswestry. In the vicinity of what is presented as a major target, the rebels are also reported to have damaged Whittington, over 2 miles east by north-east, and Felton, almost 4.5 miles south-east of Oswestry respectively. The final place associated with Owain and his chevauchée is Welshpool, apparently assaulted on 23 September. Its town and castle are over 15 miles away, again, using satellite technology to draw a straight line ignoring all contours, rivers and other obstacles, south by south-west of Oswestry. The following day, they were reportedly seen off by English forces under Hugh Burnell.<sup>109</sup>

The direction and distances involved are troubling. Certainly, to conduct the final two legs of the campaign at least, the rebels needed to be on horseback. This is alleged in the evidence from Oswestry which paints an evocative picture of the whole affair.<sup>110</sup> The circuit from Ruthin to Howarden seems reasonable for a force starting from Glyndyfrdwy, but Welshpool is over 30 miles south of their last strike. It seems difficult to associate the compact route around the Clwydian range, where all sites are a short distance from relative

<sup>108</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 32; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 102; Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 117-26.

<sup>109</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 32; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 343, n. 1 and 2; Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', p. 117. It is noteworthy in passing that there does not appear to be any other evidence from 1400 or 1401 to substantiate Burnell's alleged defeat of the rebels at Vyrnwy. This lack of corroborating sources must put the matter of this battle into question. The Dieulacres Chronicle mentions the campaign which apparently brought Owain to Oswestry in 1400 but fails to mention Burnell's presence at all or any repulse of Welsh forces in that year. However, it dates a victory against Owain to the following year and identified it as taking place on the banks of the Severn after Owain had attacked Welshpool. See Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II' *BJRL*, vol. 14, pp. 175-6.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas, 'Oswestry 1400: Glyndwr's Supporters on Trial', pp. 118, 121 '... fuerunt in comitua predicti Oweni ad dictam equitaturam suam proditoriam in exercitu victualia et auxiliis', p. 122, 'equitacionem ... equitacionem', p. 124 '... were in the retinue of the aforementioned Owain with regard to his said treacherous cavalry campaign with arms, food and aid', pp. 125 and 126 both mention 'cavalry campaign'.

safety, with the last two days of the campaign, where the rebels were stretching away beyond the support afforded by their home area. The last two days of action appear to have been the most demanding of all. To ask this of troops, tired and laden with booty, while heading away from safety seems incomprehensible. It also seems difficult to determine this force's ultimate destination. Considering the number of other localised revolts during this period, the mileage covered and the number of targets assaulted in such a short space of time, it is not unreasonable to suggest that there was more than one rebel force active in the area and that Owain has served as a convenient scapegoat.

### *1401: Further Welsh Risings.*

Winter was the traditional season of peace and recuperation, so a lack of martial activity in this period was commonplace. However, before midsummer 1401, a number of conflicts had erupted across Wales. Several sources describe a new revolt erupting in early-mid 1401; Owain can only be connected with certain of these events.<sup>111</sup>

During 1401, chronicle evidence described fighting at Welshpool and Henry IV's abuses of the monastery of Strata Florida, as well as Owain campaigning in north and west Wales that summer.<sup>112</sup> It was recorded that Owain led his scant forces towards the south-west during early summer, harried along the way by crown troops.<sup>113</sup> Royal letters, dated 28 May 1401, summoning troops from twenty-eight counties and cities to oppose 'Owen Glendourdy and other rebels', claimed that the Welsh were poised to overrun Carmarthen.<sup>114</sup> If the conflict at Hyddgen occurred in the manner described, then it probably happened in late May or early June.<sup>115</sup> Henry IV's personal, large-scale response to the perceived rebel threat in south-west Wales gives a flavour of the seriousness of the southern rising in early summer 1401. During his campaign in the south, Henry executed a number of men deemed notable rebels, such as Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan.<sup>116</sup> Owain is also reported to have stormed the castle at Radnor in August.<sup>117</sup> These actions suggest that, if all of these events were

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<sup>111</sup> PPC, vol 1, pp. 151-3, 166; CCR 1399-1402, p. 389; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, no 228, pp. 294-5; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 105; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>112</sup> PPC, vol 1, pp. 151-3; Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II' *BJRL*, vol. 14, pp. 175-6; Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 43; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 134-5, 144-5.

<sup>113</sup> PPC, vol 1, pp. 151-3; Legge, ed., *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, no 226, pp. 292-3.

<sup>114</sup> CCR, 1399-1402, pp. 389-90; Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 40; Kirby, *Calendar of Signet Letters*, p. 28.

<sup>115</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 39-40; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 266.

<sup>116</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 40, 42-4; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 56, 104-6, 238, 310; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>117</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, pp. 39-40; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 108, 266, 278, 333.

attributable to Owain, he travelled around Wales to widen the revolt that summer. It is possible that he was not responsible for all of which he was accused. Spreading the revolt around Wales might indicate that he was attempting to assume the reins of leadership of the Welsh rebels. However, it should be noted that, during 1401, Owain held negotiations with Henry Percy junior and Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester, where he allegedly sought pardon and some sort of inheritance.<sup>118</sup>

Owain Glyn Dŵr cannot be connected to three other episodes of violence that flared early in 1401. The earliest and best-known of these other two actions, the Tudor capture of Conwy and subsequent siege by Crown forces, requires consideration. As noted above, Lloyd and Davies are at variance on this event. Lloyd recognised that the Tudor goal at Conwy was to secure a pardon for themselves, nothing more, and that their actions were unconnected to those of Owain or his cause.<sup>119</sup> Davies saw it as intertwined with Owain's cause and part of the same revolt.<sup>120</sup> The evidence concerning the siege negotiations does not mention Owain, either in terms of his rising, his supposed new title of 'prince' or any discussion of a pardon for him. Lloyd appears more convincing and the capture of Conwy should be seen as another act of revolt that cannot be linked to Glyn Dŵr, except that it was contemporaneous.

For 'William ap Tudur and Rees ap Tudur his brother', however, the gamble paid off. They won pardons for themselves 'and their accomplices', issued on 20 April and confirmed 8 July 1401.<sup>121</sup> The fact that they were all pardoned, leaders and accomplices, disproves Adam Usk's accusation that the Tudors handed over some of their own men for execution when leaving Conwy.<sup>122</sup> There is no record of any such execution in other sources. The Tudors maintained their power and influence, which they could not reasonably hope to do if they gave up their own people for execution.

Another notable insurrection during 1401 was unconnected to Owain. It seems to have begun in Abergavenny in April and continued for a number of months:

On the feast of the Lord's ascension [12 May, 1401] this year, the tenants of Abergavenny rose up against their lord, Lord William Beauchamp, freeing three

<sup>118</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 182-5.

<sup>119</sup> Lloyd *Owen Glendower*, pp. 37-9 (Lloyd also places Rhys outside Conwy).

<sup>120</sup> PPC, vol 1, pp. 147 ('Willam ap Tudire q qst en le le chastell de Conway'), 150 ('Rees q est en lez montayns'); Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 52, 103-4, 199.

<sup>121</sup> Rymer, *Fœdora*, vol 8, p. 209; *CPR 1399-1401*, p. 475 'Pardon, at their supplication, William ap Tudur and Rees ap Tudur his brother of North Wales and their accomplices, who lately rose in insurrection and took the castle of Coneweye in North Wales and burned the town of Coneweye and despoiled the burgesses.'

<sup>122</sup> Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, p. 128. This notion is repeated in the 'Dieulacres Chronicle' which borrows from Usk's chronicle, although the number executed is given as eight, Clarke and Galbraith, 'The Deposition of Richard II' *BJRL*, vol. 14, pp. 173-4.

men from the gallows and killing with their arrows Sir William Lucy, knight, who had been given the task of executing them; these three had been condemned to death for theft, and were, by order of that second Jezebel, the lady of the lordship, going to be hanged that very day, heedless of the festival being celebrated at the time.<sup>123</sup>

The chronicler's anger at executions being held on the Feast of the Ascension is lost on a modern, largely secular readership. That people should face execution at such a solemn time, when the populace should have been reflecting on Christ's death and ascent to Heaven, was highly offensive to the faithful.<sup>124</sup>

This was not an isolated rescue mission by local desperadoes however; evidence tells of an organised rebellion in the area which included a siege of Abergavenny castle.<sup>125</sup> On 16 May 1401, the local gentry of the border and Herefordshire were commissioned to raise the county posse and resist the 'divers evildoers [that] have assembled in the parts of South Wales in the Lordship of Bergavenny and there committed divers homicides and other evils.'<sup>126</sup> The roll call of loyalists, all accorded the rank of 'chivaler', summoned to suppress the rebels is noteworthy; 'John Chaundos, Walter Devereux, Kinard de la Bere, John Pauncefot, John Oldcastel, John Greyndore, John ap Henry and John Skydemore.'<sup>127</sup> The latter eventually married one of Owain's daughters, Greyndore and Oldcastle remained stalwarts of the Crown in south Wales throughout the rebellion, until Oldcastle's infamous execution as a Lollard heretic in 1417. Walter Devereux and Kinard de la Bere met violent deaths at the battle of Bryn Glas. On 18 May 1401 it was recorded that the situation at Abergavenny was more perilous than it first appeared. Additional orders were despatched to immediately raise and send the Gloucestershire militia. Some time towards the end of the year, Prince Henry also wrote of the ongoing insurrection in south Wales, noting that Crown tenants and subjects were refusing to pay dues owed to the crown.<sup>128</sup> Although Lloyd and Davies were dismissive of it, this rising was enduring and considered significant by the authorities. Clearly, it should not be overlooked as an isolated incident to release three men from the gallows.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 130-3 (Lucy was the sheriff of Herefordshire. On 29 April he was commissioned by Henry IV to 'arrest John Filz Pieres and Maurice ap Meweryk and bring them before the king and council.' *CPR 1399-1401*, p. 520. Those commissioned to serve with Lucy were Walter Devereux, Thomas Clanvowe, John ap Herry and Thomas del Hay, all of whom were from the southern part of the Welsh-English border).

<sup>124</sup> Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, p. 132, n. 1.

<sup>125</sup> *CPR 1399-1405*, pp. 84, 94; *CPR 1399-1401*, pp. 518, 520; Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, pp. 130-3.

<sup>126</sup> *CPR 1399-1401*, pp. 518, 520.

<sup>127</sup> *CPR 1399-1401*, p. 518.

<sup>128</sup> *CPR 1399-1401*, pp. 518, 520; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, no. 228, pp. 294-5.

<sup>129</sup> Lloyd, *Owen Glendower*, p. 40; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 64.

There is no suggestion anywhere that Owain had any influence in south-east Wales, nor is there any inference that this rising was promoted by him or his agents. The fact that this dramatic rescue of condemned prisoners and the murder Sir William Lucy, the sheriff of Hereford, took place in an area as settled and controlled as Abergavenny, tells that most of Wales was affected by rebellion. Moreover, it seems clear that the situation in Wales deteriorated more widely than has been previously suggested.<sup>130</sup>

While Owain was attacking Radnor, on the southern-central part of the Welsh-English border, Harlech, on the north-west coast, was under siege by rebels evidently not commanded by Owain.<sup>131</sup> This siege lasted several months and no evidence places Glyn Dŵr there. By this stage, Gwent, Gwynedd, Merioneth and Carmarthenshire were in revolt.

To add to these native unrests, during summer 1401, Scots warships were active in the Irish Sea as far south as Milford in Pembrokeshire. They landed on Bardsey Island and probably communicated with the Welsh.<sup>132</sup> Concerning the siege of Harlech which continued throughout the summer and autumn of 1401, the king wrote to Prince Henry advising him that it was easier to hold such castles than to retake them. In response, a relief force of 500 men was despatched in November.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, these attacks, sieges, killings and risings previously attributed to Owain should be sited within the wider context of these other contemporary events.

## Conclusions

Almost twenty years ago, Rees Davies wrote that his publication 'supplements and amends Lloyd's account in several directions in the light of work undertaken since his day and of unpublished documents.'<sup>134</sup> With that in mind, expanding the study area of all things related to Owain Glyn Dŵr is to honour and to continue the work of Lloyd and Davies.

With this particular period of the revolt in focus, it is evident that the outbreak of rebellion in Wales was far more complex than has previously been portrayed. In contrast to the traditional view of events, this uprising was not attributable to any one man, family or region. As the contemporary evidence plainly demonstrates, at its outbreak and during the

<sup>130</sup> *CPR 1399–1401*, pp. 518, 520; *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1399–1405*, p. 94; Sir William Lucy was the sheriff of Hereford, see Given-Wilson, *Adam Usk*, p. 132.

<sup>131</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 105.

<sup>132</sup> *PPC*, vol 1, pp. 152-3; Davies, *Revolt*, p. 190.

<sup>133</sup> Legge, ed., *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, no. 236, pp. 301-2; Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 105.

<sup>134</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 99.

first years of rebellion, this conflict was not one of Owain Glyn Dŵr's making or direction. Even once he had joined the fray over a year after the violence began, other uprisings and sieges occurred without his involvement. However, hindsight, convenience and more recent political motivations have shaped our understanding of the revolt.

It seems axiomatic that studies on Owain, such as those of Lloyd and Davies, would focus more on his actions than those of other rebels. Nevertheless, it is inaccurate to dismiss the other risings as isolated events inferior to Glyn Dŵr's role in the sacking of Ruthin. The number, spread and seriousness of the other violent eruptions demonstrate that tensions across Wales were severe enough to bring men to bear arms against the authorities in their own areas, for their own causes, rather than simply to muster before Owain. While important, the traditional tale of this revolt's beginning, that of a dispute between Owain and Grey burning out of control, forms just one part of the story. With the hindsight of Owain's later leadership of the Welsh, this personal quarrel has, perhaps unreasonably, been accorded precedence over all other acts of rebellion. The contemporary accounts do not give Owain's actions the same pre-eminence, but instead place him as one among a number of men such as Gwilym and Rhys ap Tudor, Rhys Gethin, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan, John Filz Pieres and Maurice ap Meweryk.

The first act, which began in Carmarthenshire in July 1399 and spread across Wales, saw Welshmen attack supporters of Richard and Henry. Without this catalyst event, it seems reasonable to question the size, impact or perhaps even the existence of the other risings in Wales. Other acts of rebellion in 1400 drew the king and his army to Caernarfon, not to Glyndyfrdwy. For their deeds, Owain and two of the Tudors were declared traitors and their lands were forfeit; they were undeniably part of these uprisings. However, when suppressing the troubles, the authorities issued a warrant of arrest for Rhys Gethin, rather than for Owain Glyn Dŵr. The following year, those governing Wales were confronted with the Tudor attack on Conwy, another rising in Carmarthenshire and a revolt centred on Abergavenny, as well as a rash of localised skirmishes and ambushes. The English response was indicative of their assessment of the dangers they faced: they granted pardons to the Tudors and their troops, and issued warrants of arrest for John Filz Pieres and Maurice ap Meweryk who were involved in the Abergavenny rebellion. In addition, Henry IV took his army to Carmarthen to suppress the uprising there which, while it might have had a connection to Glyn Dŵr, it was not caused or led by Owain, if he were present.

The roots of the grievances that brought so many to war were most likely numerous; some based on local issues and personalities, others more generic. For the latter, it is probable

that the oppressive legal and economic conditions under which the Welsh were held were common, prominent points of contention. This does not explicitly prove that a movement based on 'national unity' arose; those in the south did not rise because those in the north were under attack, for example. It does, however, demonstrate commonality of grievances and of action. While many in England revolted too, from Bolingbroke's supporters to those in Cheshire who rose against Henry, their causes and desired outcomes appear to have been different to those of the Welsh rebels. One group strove to change the conditions under which they lived, the other disputed England's leadership. These differences are principal reasons which have enabled this conflict to be characterised, though not entirely accurately, as one prosecuted along 'national' lines. Those lines were partially blurred however, Englishmen fought for causes we currently identify as Welsh, while some Welshmen supported the king of England.<sup>135</sup> While Rees Davies was correct in identifying an aspect of the conflict as 'ethnic', particularly in the legal measures enacted against the Welsh, it is simplistic to term the conflict in that way.<sup>136</sup>

The eruption of numerous rebellious episodes, with no overall leader initially nor any clear structure or programme, portrays the classic picture of an insurgency. Where the central authority is weak, unstable or in crisis, governments quickly lose effective control. Where sufficient disaffection is also present, revolts erupt and, where the authorities fail to suppress and punish the first risings, the contagion can quickly spread, as it did in Wales. These widespread but localised attacks make the rebels appear omnipresent, well-organised and possessing a measure of control or influence across the nation. Once scrutinised however, it seems probable that none of the acts of rebellion described above were directly connected, although the earliest attacks probably encouraged others. Widespread, well-motivated insurgencies have, historically, proven extremely difficult to suppress; the Welsh revolt which followed stands as an excellent example. This period saw a number of other revolts across Europe.<sup>137</sup> With England suffering the turbulence of Bolingbroke's rebellion and subsequent attempts at counter-revolution by Ricardian loyalists, it is unsurprising that the Welsh rebels were able to gain the initiative and cause English governance in Wales to begin to stumble, even though that might not have been their aim at that early point.

<sup>135</sup>Lloyd Owen *Glendower*, p. 43 (Dafydd Gam, among others); Davies, *Revolt*, pp. 216-7 (more examples of English supporters of Owain: the Hammers, Pulesdons, John Estewicke, William Hunte, David Perrot and others), pp. 226-7 (Gam).

<sup>136</sup>Davies, *Revolt* (use of the term 'ethnic' to distinguish Welsh from English), pp. 173, 217, 224, 290.

<sup>137</sup>Carr, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 110-1.



This study also concludes that it is improbable that Owain was proclaimed prince of Wales by his supporters on 16 September 1400. That claim is only made in the same extreme, hysterical legal proceedings against him which simultaneously accused him of wishing to kill the king, his heirs and every English noble, as well as purposing to destroy the English language in its entirety. The fact that Owain did not use that title in any letter issued over the next four years seems persuasive. There is a notable lack of other contemporary sources corroborating the story of his supposed elevation to prince. He did not use that title until he made official representation to the French in May 1404, by which point he was the *de facto* ruler. Although the revolt was not Owain's at its outbreak, by virtue of his personality and talent as a commander, it undeniably became his shortly after.

This new vision of the revolt's outbreak does not diminish the accomplishments of Owain Glyn Dŵr, on the contrary, it renders the events which followed all the more impressive. The notion that the people accepted Owain as their leader in due course, and not simply that he raised his sword and they were compelled to follow, seems a persuasive one. It is noteworthy that Owain was lauded in poetry before and after the revolt, even when the poets were no longer paid to sing his praises.<sup>138</sup>

However, the idea that people across Wales supported him because of his bloodline appears unsustainable. Welsh loyalties to their leaders had, for centuries, been fragmented, localised and consensual. Any claim that Owain was the distant heir to historical political entities such as Powys Fadog or, through the uncommon practice of inheriting through his mother's line, Deheubarth, was unlikely to have provoked many to bear arms for his cause.<sup>139</sup> Each territory had been extinguished several generations previously and most Welshmen had no connection to either. Indeed, while both territories existed, Powys and Gwynedd were enduring enemies, so adherents to one were not obliged to support a rebirth of the other. Any argument that proposes that Owain's power and influence was founded on his heritage ignores the other, more realistic reasons for the eventual growth of his power. This article does not lessen Owain's name, instead it aims to add to the corpus of study on him by highlighting the complex situation that existed in Wales at the outbreak of conflict there.

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<sup>138</sup> E. A. Rees, *A Life of Guto'r Glyn* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2008), p. 14 (examples thereof pp. 48-58, 89, 99, 101); M. Livingston and J. K. Bollard, eds., *Owain Glyndŵr, a Casebook* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 519-50.

<sup>139</sup> Davies, *Revolt*, p. 131.

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